

Endurance Before Breakthrough

A companion devotional to Episode 2: “A War of Endurance”

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

This devotional accompanies Episode 2 of the *Kingdoms Collide Podcast* that explores 40 years of church in Ephesus. For the historical setting, narrative context, and complete story behind this devotional, listen to [Episode 2: “A War of Endurance”](#)

You can listen and find more free resources at www.KingdomsCollide.com/ephesus/episode-2

Read: Acts 19:1-10

Some seasons of faithfulness are dramatic but most of them are not.

Most look like waking up, doing what God has placed in front of you, going home tired, and doing it again tomorrow.

That is what we see in Paul’s life when he returns to Ephesus.

The first time he entered the city, he stayed only briefly.

But when Paul returns to Ephesus, he is prepared to stay for as long as it takes.

The city still looks much the same.

Artemis still towers over its religious life. Rome still governs. Merchants still trade. Pilgrims still arrive. Magic, commerce, power, religion, and civic loyalty still shape everyday life.

Acts 19:1-10 unfolds slowly. Ephesus does not immediately erupt into mass conversion, and the extraordinary miracles recorded later in the chapter have not happened yet. Instead, Paul’s long Ephesian ministry begins somewhere surprisingly small.

Twelve men.

Paul encounters a group whom Acts describes as disciples. They know something about repentance and John’s baptism, but their understanding has stopped short of the

full gospel. They have not yet understood what has happened through Jesus or received the Holy Spirit in the way Paul expects of believers.

Paul does not dismiss them because their understanding is incomplete.

He teaches them.

They listen.

They are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Paul lays his hands on them, the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and they speak in tongues and prophecy.

Paul's return to Ephesus does not begin with a crowd; it begins with twelve people.

Inside one of the great cities of Roman Asia, with a population in the hundreds of thousands, twelve people are almost nothing.

Ephesus can gather thousands in the Temple of Artemis at one time.

Rome commands massive armies.

The marketplace moves fortunes. Twelve people would barely register against the scale of the city.

Paul has twelve people.

Yet God's kingdom has never depended upon looking impressive at the beginning.

The twelve men also teach us something important about endurance before Paul has even begun his long years of ministry.

They were willing to keep growing.

They could have defended the limits of what they already knew. They could have decided that their previous experience was sufficient. Instead, when Scripture and the gospel showed them there was more to understand, they responded.

That kind of teachability is part of endurance too.

Sometimes continuing with God means refusing to become permanently satisfied with yesterday's understanding of Him.

The Christian life is not a search for secret spiritual knowledge. It is an ever-deepening surrender to Jesus Christ.

There is more of His grace to understand.

More of His Word to obey.

More dependence upon His Spirit.

More of our lives to place under His Lordship.

And these twelve men are going to need the Spirit's presence, because the enduring season they are entering will not be an easy one.

After this, Paul enters the synagogue.

For three months, he reasons boldly about the Kingdom of God.

For three months, week after week, conversation after conversation, question after question.

Some believe, but eventually resistance toward Paul and his message of Jesus Christ hardens in the synagogue.

Acts says that some became stubborn and spoke evil of Paul and the Christian movement publicly.

Three months in, Paul is faced with a decision.

He can spend all his energy trying to preserve a room that has become hostile or he can recognize that the mission matters more than the location.

Paul moves.

He takes the disciples and begins teaching daily in a place associated with a man named Tyrannus.

The door to the synagogue has closed but the door to the school has opened.

We often interpret a closed door as failure.

But in Paul's case, the calling remained while the method changed.

Paul does not abandon Ephesus because the synagogue becomes hostile. He also does not worship the synagogue as though God can only work there.

He pivots without quitting.

That distinction is important.

Endurance is not stubbornly repeating the same strategy forever.

Sometimes endurance means staying committed to the mission while allowing God to change the method.

Paul loses one room.

Then God uses a different place to build His church.

Acts tells us that Paul continues in Tyrannus for two years.

That sentence is easy to read quickly.

But imagine living it.

To feel the endurance hidden inside these ten verses, we have to slow the story down. The words can be read in a few minutes, but the events stretch across more than two years.

Two years of ordinary mornings. Two years of teaching. Two years of questions, resistance, work, relationships, and hoping to see results tomorrow.

So after Paul encounters hardened resistance from some within the synagogue, he enters two years of grinding daily faithfulness, without being able to see the full scale of what that faithfulness is producing.

Based on research, Paul's days could have looked something like this:

5AM - 11AM: Cut leather, sew fabric, bind ropes, sell tents. Stand in the market in between a place that sells magic scrolls and a place that sells idols of Artemis.

11AM - 4PM: Teach about Jesus in the Hall of Tyrannus, in the middle of the Mediterranean heat, when most people go home to eat and rest. Teach to people passing by that seem to not pay you any attention.

4PM - Late: Go house to house praying for families, discipling new believers, and answering questions that they were scared to ask publicly.

By the time Paul gets to sleep, it is almost time for his day to start again.

He will work again, teach again, go house to house again...

Paul later tells the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 that these years included humility, tears, public teaching, and ministry from house to house. He reminds them that his own hands worked to provide for his needs and for those around him.

This was a grueling daily grind as Paul showed what faithful endurance looks like.

The same hands opening Scripture were working.

The same hands praying for people were hurting.

The same man teaching about resurrection from a tomb likely struggled to rise from his own bed in the morning from exhaustion.

Paul does not take Ephesus by storm.

He takes it by schedule.

And for around two years, before Acts shows us the extraordinary miracles, the remarkable thing is the schedule.

We normally celebrate the huge visible breakthroughs...

We remember the day the prayer was answered.

We remember the person who finally changed.

We remember the ministry that grew.

We remember the door that opened.

We rarely remember the hundreds of ordinary days that made those moments possible.

Paul did not know, each morning, how the story we read about Ephesus would end.

He could teach Jesus all afternoon and walk outside to see Artemis still standing.

He could say that gods cannot be made with human hands but people still bought the idols in the market.

The old gods still had worshipers. Rome still ruled.

Ephesus consistently looked unchanged after every full day of Paul's faithfulness.

So Paul came back tomorrow.

That is endurance.

Not surviving one extraordinary moment.

Remaining faithful through thousands of ordinary ones.

And then something begins happening that Paul cannot completely see.

People listen.

People learn.

People leave.

The same roads that carry Roman commerce begin carrying the gospel.

The same harbor that brings travelers into Ephesus sends some of them away having heard about Jesus.

Acts does not tell us every name of the people that took the Gospel with them or all of the routes that the Gospel travelled, but the result is unmistakable.

Acts 19:10 says that this continued for two years until **all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.**

Paul remains in one city but the Word moves through the whole region.

That is one of the great lessons of faithful endurance:

Your obedience can travel farther than you can.

The wider New Testament picture eventually introduces figures such as Epaphras, Tychicus, and Trophimus, whose ministries became connected with the gospel movement radiating from Ephesus.

Epaphras would become deeply connected with the churches of the Lycus Valley.

Tychicus would later become one of Paul's trusted messengers.

Trophimus would travel with Paul.

And beyond the names scripture preserves were undoubtedly believers whose names disappeared from history.

People heard.

People believed.

People went home.

Paul saw students while God saw carriers.

Paul saw conversations while God saw cities.

Paul saw the room while God saw Asia.

This should change the way we think about ordinary faithfulness in our normal days.

We often want God to show us the result before we commit to the hard work of repetition.

Show me that my children are listening.

Then I'll keep teaching.

Show me that the person is changing.

Then I'll keep praying.

Show me that the ministry is growing.

Then I'll keep serving.

Show me that anyone notices.

Then I'll keep showing up.

But faithfulness often works in the opposite direction.

You do the next right thing without knowing where it will go.

You pray again.

You teach again.

You forgive again.

You show up again.

You open the Bible again.

You have the conversation again.

You serve the person again.

Not because repetition earns God's favor but because grace produces a kind of faithfulness that does not need applause every morning.

Jesus Himself endured.

He continued teaching slow learners.

He continued loving people who misunderstood Him.

He continued toward Jerusalem knowing a cross waited there.

He finished what the Father had given Him to do.

And because Christ finished the work that saves us, we can stop trying to prove our worth through visible results.

Our assignment is faithfulness.

God's responsibility is fruitfulness.

That distinction may be one of the most freeing truths in Paul's years at Ephesus.

Paul could not make Asia listen.

He could only teach whoever sat in front of him.

Paul could not personally travel into every household and every city.

He could only form disciples who would carry the gospel farther than he could go.

Paul could not make Ephesus change overnight.

He could only try again tomorrow.

And somewhere in that ordinary repetition, God was accomplishing something much larger.

The city still looked stable.

Artemis still looked permanent.

Rome still looked powerful.

But loyalties were quietly changing.

A person trusts Jesus.

Then another.

A household changes.

A traveler carries the message home.

Another believer tells another person.

Nothing looks dramatic enough to alarm the city yet.

But underneath the surface, the ground is moving.

There are cracks in the foundation that Ephesus is built on.

Kingdoms are ultimately built on loyalty and every person who learns to say **Jesus is Lord** is placing their deepest allegiance somewhere new.

Soon, that change will become visible.

Magic will lose its grip.

Old practices will be abandoned.

Money will be affected.

A city will begin to notice.

But not yet.

Right now, Paul is still teaching.

Still working.

Still praying.

Still going house to house.

Still showing up.

And maybe that is exactly where some of us are.

You have been praying, but nothing seems different.

You have been parenting, but you cannot tell what is taking root.

You have been serving, but nobody seems to notice.

You have been trying to live faithfully at work, while everything around you looks unchanged.

You have been teaching the lesson.

Having the conversation.

Opening your home.

Showing grace.

Doing the next right thing.

And the temptation is beginning to whisper:

Maybe this isn't working.

Paul's years in Ephesus give us another possibility:

Maybe you cannot see everything your faithfulness is touching.

Maybe you are looking at one person while God sees everyone that person may eventually reach.

Maybe the work is deeper than the visible result.

Maybe your assignment today is not to produce the breakthrough.

Maybe your assignment is to try again tomorrow.

Open the Scriptures.

Love the person.

Do the work.

Pray again.

And leave the size of the outcome with God.

Paul was faithful.

God was fruitful.

This is the war of endurance.

LIVE IT TODAY

Choose one faithful practice that you know belongs in your present season but that has become difficult because you are not seeing much visible fruit.

It may be praying for someone.

Teaching your children.

Preparing faithfully for a church responsibility.

Checking on someone who is struggling.

Doing your work with integrity.

Studying Scripture.

Serving your spouse.

Continuing a conversation.

Investing in one person.

Write the practice down.

Then commit to three specific repetitions of it during the next seven days.

Put those times on your calendar.

Before each one, pray:

“Jesus, my responsibility is faithfulness. The fruit belongs to You.”

Then do the work in front of you without demanding immediate proof that it mattered.

At the end of the week, do not first ask, “What changed?”

Ask:

“Was I faithful?”

Trust God with everything you cannot yet see.

JOURNAL PROMPT

Where am I most tempted to quit because I cannot see the result of my faithfulness?

Describe what you hoped would have happened by now.

Then consider Paul's years in Ephesus and write honestly about the difference between the result you want and the responsibility God has actually placed in front of you.

Finish with this sentence:

"Even if I cannot see the fruit yet, the next faithful thing I can do is..."

Be specific.

PRAYER PROMPT

Jesus, give me grace to remain faithful when the work feels ordinary and the results remain hidden. Fill me with Your Spirit, give me wisdom when the method needs to change, and keep me from quitting what You have actually called me to do. Help me trust that You can carry one act of obedience farther than I can see. Make me faithful, and teach me to trust You with the fruit. Amen.

The Next Episode Devotional:

What Are You Still Holding Onto?

Companion to Episode 3

It is available for free at www.KingdomsCollide.com/ephesus/episode-3

In the next episode, we will watch Ephesus begin to change as the gospel has spread throughout the province. Miracles happen and soon a fire burns in the middle of the city. It is now time to ask ourselves whether some of the things we are still holding onto need to be laid down, surrendered, or even set into the fire.

A Note from the Author:

I sincerely hope that you have found something of value in this devotion. Kingdoms Collide is a ministry passion project from a guy that loves Jesus. If you need prayer or if you want to share a kind word with me, I would love to hear from you. Everyone needs prayer and encouragement. I would love to be that for you and for you to be that for me. Feel free to email me at KingdomsCollidePodcast@gmail.com

Every prayer request is confidential and will not be used in any media or promotional material.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Henderson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.